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YAAS MAY TURN INTO A VERY SEVERE CYCLONIC STORM: IMD

It is likely to reach north Bay of Bengal near West Bengal and the north Odisha and Bangladesh coasts by May 26 morning

WIND SPEEDS UP TO 165 KMPH, HEAVY RAINS

Days after Tauktae pummeled the west coast and wreaked havoc, Yass' formation sent the National Crisis Management Committee into a huddle on Saturday. Attending the meeting, the IMD said the cyclone will pack wind speeds up to 155-165 kmph, accompanied by heavy rainfall and storm surges in the coastal districts and recommended large scale evacuations

85 NDRF TEAMS, ARMY, SHIPS ON STAND-BY

- While the NDRF will deploy 85 teams, the army, navy and coast guard, along with ships and aircraft, will also chip in for rescue
- Covid-appropriate shelters set up, with adequate stocks of food grains, drinking water, medicines and other essential supplies
- Works on to ensure uninterrupted oxygen and medicine supplies

6th

NAMED BY OMAN, IT IS THE 6TH STORM OVER NORTH INDIAN OCEAN THIS YEAR

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

INTERVIEW

High positivity rate due to focused tests, says TAC chief

RAMU PATIL @ Bengaluru

EVEN as Covid deaths and positivity rate continue to remain high, State Covid Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Chairman Dr MK Sudarshan said the high positivity rate is due to focused testing of symptomatic people and primary contacts of Covid-positive patients.

The situation is improving and is likely to stabilise by the end of next month, he said and added that the 14-day lockdown has had a fairly good effect as there has been some decline in the number of cases and test positivity rate. On Saturday, the state reported 31,183 new cases and 451 deaths, and the day's positivity rate was at 24.21 per cent. On May 9, a day before the 14-day lockdown was announced, Karnataka had reported 47,930 new cases and 490 deaths, and the positivity rate was at 32.71 per cent. The existing lockdown has been extended by another 14 days till June 7.

The TAC chief emphasised on stricter enforcement of the lockdown to fight the pandemic.

FULL INTERVIEW: P4

The worst is yet to come for developing nations: IMF

Says India is a warning of possible events in other low- and middle-income countries that so far have seemingly escaped the pandemic

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

INDIA's second Covid wave is a warning for things to come in low- and middle-income countries that have escaped the pandemic till now, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"The ongoing catastrophic second wave in India, following a terrible wave in Brazil, is a sign the worst may be yet to come in the developing world," said a report co-authored by IMF's Chief Economist Gita Gopinath and economist Ruchir Agarwal.

In the first wave, India's healthcare system held up fairly well but this time, the country's medical infrastructure seems to be crumbling under the case load, the discussion paper noted.

According to the note, the vaccine coverage in India is expected to remain under 35% of the population by the end of 2021. To get to 60% coverage, India will need to immediately place sufficient vaccine orders of about 1 billion doses through contracts that incentivise investment in additional capacity and augmentation of the supply chain, it added.

"In this context, the recently announced financing of about $600 million to the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech to boost production capacity in the near term is a welcome step," the report said, adding that authorities estimate two billion doses will be available by the end of 2021.

"India is a warning of possible events in other low- and middle-income countries that so far have seemingly escaped the pandemic, including in Africa," the report said.

For India, current bilateral purchases of vaccine plus coverage from Covax will cover about 25% of its population by the first half of 2022.

Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access, or Covax, is a worldwide initiative for equitable access to Covid vaccines.

The IMF report said India continues to face vaccine production bottlenecks, including due to ongoing shortages of critical raw materials.

According to IMF, urgent steps should be taken to eliminate constraints on cross-border exports of critical raw materials and finished vaccines.

A RAINY AFTERNOON

As heavy rain lashes Bengaluru, a pedestrian shields herself with an umbrella, on Mysuru Road on Saturday | SHRIHARI KV

Covid -ve report a must to enter K'taka: Bommai

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Hubballi, Belagavi, Bengaluru

HOME Minister **Basavaraj Bommai** on Saturday said that those entering Karnataka from other States by road should mandatorily produce RTPCR-negative reports.

The State Government has kept a strict vigil on the movement of vehicles at all entry points along the border, as instructed by the Central government, he told reporters at Shiggaon.

"For stricter implementation of lockdown, a heavy deployment of police force has been made in border districts. The RTCPCR negative report for those travelling from other states is part of this move," he clarified.

He asked officials in border districts of Belagavi, Vijayapura, Bidar, Kalaburagi and Mangaluru to increase checking of vehicles coming in from other states.

Belagavi SP Laxman Nimbargi said, "The Health Department insists that people entering from Maharashtra and Goa should produce RT-PCR negative reports. This has been going on for several weeks now. They should produce the report within 72 hours of entering the state."

The Airports Authority of India at airports and the Railway Department at railway stations have been checking negative test reports of interstate travellers, the SP said.

Police impound 2,309 vehicles in Bengaluru

The Bengaluru police on Saturday seized 2,039 vehicles and registered 35 cases against shops and commercial establishments for violating lockdown norms. The police also detained some people who were moving around on vehicles without valid reasons and released them later on station bail.

A senior police officer said that they have put up barricades across the city to restrict the movement of people during lockdown hours, and that patrolling has been intensified. Checkpoints have been put up at entry and exit points of the city, he added.

RAMDEV
MISLED PEOPLE: IMA

It urged the Centre to take action against the Yoga guru for making unscientific statements against modern medicine | P7

NATIONWIDE	MAY 21	MAY 22
Fresh cases	2,59,551	2,57,299
Recoveries	3,57,295	3,57,630
Deaths	4,209	4,194

KARNATAKA	MAY 21	MAY 22
Fresh cases	32,218	31,183
Recoveries	52,581	61,766
Deaths	353	451

JAB-O-METER

TAKE YOUR SHOT
May 21: 13,83,358 doses
May 22: 15,52,126 doses
TOTAL DOSES: 19,49,51,603

EXPRESS READ

Nepal Prez dissolves House, snap polls in Nov

Kathmandu: Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the House of Representatives on Saturday for the second time in five months, and announced snap elections in the Himalayan nation in November, rejecting both embattled Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli and the Opposition alliance's claims to form a government. The move is expected to be legally challenged yet again.

B'luru sees 40 child marriages since Jan 2020

BALA CHAUHAN @ Bengaluru

A 16-year-old HIV-positive married girl from north Karnataka was rescued in Bengaluru in January this year by the police and produced before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) after she lodged a complaint against her husband over domestic violence.

"The minor, when produced before the CWC, narrated to us that she got married when she was 14 to a 22-year-old man in Bengaluru. Her first born died after five months. She had conceived again, but suffered a miscarriage five months into her pregnancy," said Chairperson, CWC (for girls aged between six and 18 years), Bengaluru Urban jurisdiction, Anjali Ramanna.

Subsequent to his arrest under the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Karnataka Amendment) Act, 2016, the minor's husband was found to be HIV-positive.

"The girl, when sent for medical examination, was also found to be HIV-positive. We tried to track her family in Raichur and found her mother, who worked as house help in the neighbouring state. She refused to come to Bengaluru to meet her daughter. We also found out that the girl was HIV-positive at birth and has been on antiretroviral therapy (ART) drugs for a long time," said the Child Welfare Committee chairperson.

The minor has been sent to an institution for HIV-positive children for care and support under the CWC supervision.

Bengaluru, the IT City, has a dark underbelly marred with crimes against children. Child marriage is one of them.

"The CWC Bengaluru Urban jurisdiction has received 40 cases of child marriage between January 2020 and May 1 this year," the CWC chairperson added.

CONTINUED ON: P5

WITH THIS ISSUE
THE UNSCRUPULOUS INDIAN
PLUS 12 PAGES MAGAZINE

Steroid overuse sparked black fungus cases, says Centre; tally at 8,848

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

THE Centre on Saturday released a national list of mucormycosis (black fungus) infection case count among the convalescing Covid patients, placing the number at 8,848. It blamed uncontrolled and irrational use of steroids as part of Covid-19 treatment regimen for the infection, but said it was not an outbreak. Admitting that the supply of Amphotericin B, a drug used to treat the infection, was limited, it said efforts were on to ramp up the production capacity.

"Amphotericin B's availability and supply is being raised. The department of Pharma is coordinating with the Ministry of Health to provide license to five additional manufacturers. The existing manufacturers are working towards increasing their production capacity," said Lav Agarwal, joint secretary of the health ministry.

Meanwhile, stating that Covid was not responsible for black fungus cases, Dr VK Paul, NITI Aayog's member (health), said: "Steroids are wonder drugs that help save lives, but when irrational doses are given, they have a negative impact. One of them is black fungus."

Stating that the infection existed even during pre-Covid times, he said: "It is an uncommon illness that primarily affects the diabetic, but it has not spread in the form of an outbreak."

As per official data, 23,000 vials of Amphotericin B have been sent to the worst-hit states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra and Telangana, among others.

According to AIIMS, New Delhi, chief Dr Randeep Guleria, persistent headache or swelling on one side of the face were some of the symptoms of the rare infection. He said discolouration in the mouth and decreased sensation in any part of the face, too, were signs that convalescent patients must consult a doctor.

LONGER WAIT

Vaccine for 18-44 group not open yet, clarifies State Govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE State Government has changed its vaccination policy again. Two days after announcing that it would restart the vaccination process for the 18-44 age group, National Health Mission (NHM) Director Dr Arundhathi Chandrashekhar issued a clarification on Saturday that vaccines are currently not available and even identified frontline workers, vulnerable groups and priority members will be informed of the date and time of vaccination by nodal officers.

Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar had earlier tweeted, "From May 22, vaccination for people in the 18-44 age group will resume. State government-identified frontline workers and priority groups will be vaccinated first." P5

Boosted by RBI's dividend gift, FinMin asks PSUs to ramp up capital spending

ANURADHA SHUKLA @ New Delhi

ENCOURAGED by the more-than-expected dividend handout from the Reserve Bank of India, the finance ministry has asked Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) to exceed their Capex target by 20-25% than what was originally given in the budget and also to use reserve to increase dividend.

The ministry has sent an internal note to the top management of CPSEs in this regard, a senior official told *TNIE*. "Last year, many CPSEs failed to increase their capex in the first half. It was done only after the FM nudged them to do so in several meetings. Learning from the lessons from the first wave, they have been asked to be prompt and scale up so that it will help economic recovery," the official said.

Last year, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her meetings with CPSE heads constantly followed up to increase capital spending to make up for the curb in expenditure. It worked. CPSEs in the oil and gas sector alone recorded a capex of ₹5,610 crore in April, higher than what they had spent the previous year.

As the government is likely to miss the divestment target, it is banking on extra dividend.

On Friday, RBI announced it would transfer ₹99,122 crore as surplus to the Centre for the nine months ended March 31.

AGAINST ALL ODDS

Positive attitude beats age, nonagenarians cured of Covid

IFFATH FATHIMA & DIVYA CUTINHO @ Bengaluru, Mangaluru

WITH right diagnosis, timely treatment and positive attitude, there is hope for even people in their ripe old age who have tested Covid-positive.

In heart-warming incidents, an elderly couple -- 95-year-old R Vasanth, an ex-service man who served the British Army during World War 2, and his wife, 90-year-old Laskhmi Devi, in Bengaluru and 95-year-old Alice Pinto, a co-morbid patient, in Mangaluru were discharged from hospital.

The Bengaluru couple, who tested positive for Covid in April last week, came out of Bowring Hospital on Friday evening.

Vasanth and Lakshmi, who live by themselves in Uttarahalli, had developed symptoms of diarrhoea and fever, and they got tested. When the tests came positive, their family members decided not to tell them that they were Covid-positive, but they had been infected by a viral infection that needed medication.

CONTINUED ON: P3

Nonagenarians R Vasanth and his wife, Lakshmi Devi | EXPRESS

FEWER TESTS LEADING TO DIP IN CASES: CONG

The Opposition Congress on Saturday hit out at the State Government, accusing it of instilling a false sense of confidence among the people by claiming that Covid cases have reduced in the state. Former CM Siddaramaiah stated the numbers have come down only because of reduced testing. P3